

 esplanade

The Studios

AN ESPLANADE CO-PRODUCTION

MONSTRESS

4 - 6 SEP 2026

ESPLANADE THEATRE STUDIO

WRITTEN BY
CLAIRE TEO

DIRECTED BY
YVAN KARLSSON

PRODUCED BY
ART:DIS
(ARTS AND DISABILITY) SINGAPORE



About Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay

Esplanade is Singapore's national performing arts centre. It hosts a year-round line-up of about 4,000 live performances and activities presented by Esplanade, its partners and hirers. As an arts centre for everyone, Esplanade also creates opportunities for seniors, youth, children and underserved communities to experience the arts. More than 70% of the shows that take place each year at the centre are free for all to enjoy.

Esplanade also brings the arts virtually to audiences in Singapore and beyond, through its diverse range of digital programmes on *Esplanade Offstage*, an all-access backstage pass to the performing arts and guide to Singapore and Asian arts and culture, with videos, podcasts, articles, quizzes and resources.

The centre works in close partnership with local, regional and international artists to develop artistic capabilities and content, push artistic boundaries and engage audiences. Esplanade supports the creation of artistic content by commissioning and producing new Singapore and Asian work for the international stage. It also develops technical capabilities for the industry nationally.

Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay is operated by The Esplanade Co Ltd (TECL), which is a not-for-profit organisation, a registered Charity and an Institution of a Public Character. TECL received the Charity Governance Award – Special Commendation for Clarity of Strategy in 2016 and 2022, the Charity Transparency Award from 2016 – 2023, and the Charity Transparency Dedication Award in 2024. Esplanade is Singapore's first Dementia-Friendly Arts Venue and a certified Dementia Go-To Point, as well as a guide/assistance dog friendly centre.

TECL receives funding support from Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth and its Community Programmes are supported by Tote Board Family, comprising Tote Board, Singapore Pools and Singapore Turf Club.

Visit [Esplanade.com](https://www.esplanade.com) for more information.

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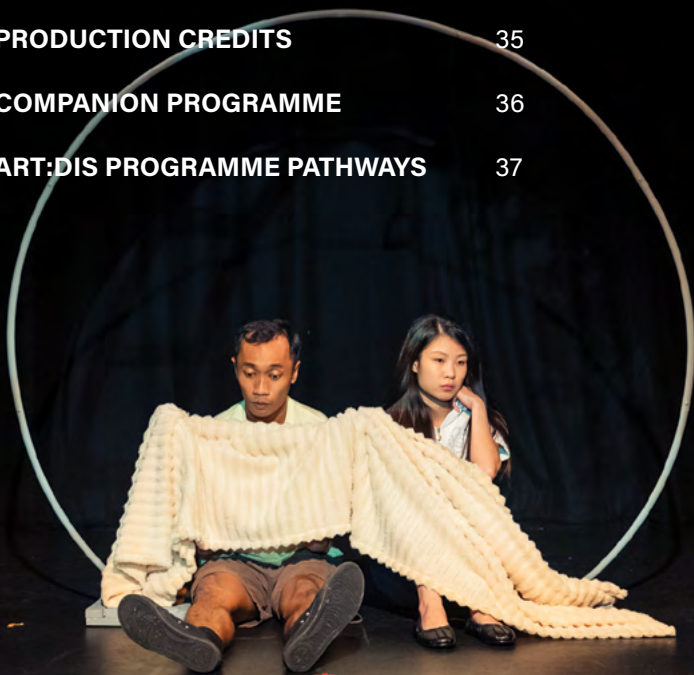
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ABOUT THE STUDIOS

Eclectic, genre-bending and running the gamut from neo-realism to experimental, *The Studios* features works that challenge the boundaries in theatre and performance. It is interested in contemporary artists, ideas and expressions, and offers a space for dialogue and reflection on the questions that matter to us today.

esplanade.com/thestudios



SEASON MESSAGE

We live in a moment when the ground beneath familiar structures, ideas and ideals keeps moving, and with unprecedented speed. The fracture and shapelessness of our world today has left many of us navigating without a clear map. Borders are redrawn, allegiances are in flux, truths are contested.

In this disorienting landscape, questions of power feel newly urgent. Who holds it, and how is it exercised? What conditions enable it to take root, and what makes change possible?

As a universal idea, power resonates across time, geography, culture and personal circumstance. It is evocative precisely because it is lived. Each person encounters and understands it through their own experience, their own moment in history. We see and feel its effects daily. It is solid and imposing, fluid and multi-faceted.

As a concept, it is so often flattened, and immediately conjures up specific meanings, associated images, and visceral responses. How, then, do we approach power in a meaningful way, that might offer a fresh perspective or proposition?

Over the next three years, *The Studios*, an annual theatre season presented by Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay, will explore its many manifestations, as the world around us continues to shift.

We begin with ***Precarious Bodies***. The season, which runs from 24 Jul to 6 Sep, looks at the conditions, structures and relationships that render us precarious, the dilemmas that arise and the choices we make.

The precarious 'body' is a socially constructed entity shaped by culture, circumstance and perception, both public and personal. We are made precarious by the actions of others and we cause others to be precarious with the relative power we each wield. The consequences or impact of these actions are sometimes only visible with the passing of time, or felt only by

the most vulnerable. We are also drawn to potential, especially in the fragile, liminal space just before action or change. While that potential always holds the risk of harm, it equally harbours the possibility of empathy, care and courage.

Precarious Bodies is an invitation to audiences to consider what it means to be precarious and to find their own interpretations of and relationships with power. The five productions this season bring to the fore our interconnectedness as human beings, whether we stand as individuals, communities, or part of systems and ideologies. Through diverse forms of theatre: documentary theatre, video, text, music, movement and social experiment, these works invite us to consider the complex workings of power, its effects through different bodies and contexts and the roles we play within them.

We open the season with ***Fragments of Tuah* (Mark Teh & Five Arts Centre, Malaysia)**, examining the mythologised figure of Hang Tuah, peeling the layers of the composite image of a hero that continues to embody national values and Malay identity in Malaysia. The work questions the gaps, contradictions and erasures that have led to the veneration of this legend.

We encounter bodies under surveillance and confinement in ***Blind Runner* (Amir Reza Koohestani & Mehr Theatre Group, Iran)**, where the strained relationship between an imprisoned political activist and her husband contrasts with the bond he forms with a blind marathon runner. As one relationship breaks down and another blooms, a risky plan emerges, shaped by struggle, solidarity and our instinct to make a run towards freedom.

The power dynamics at the workplace comes into focus in ***MULTIPLE BAD THINGS* (Back to Back Theatre, Australia)**, where privilege and self-preservation test the limits of our bodies and our capacity to care. Idle chitchat descends into manipulation, words are used as weapons to marginalise and belittle, and apathy reigns. Unfolding with sardonic humour, we see our worst behaviours on unapologetic display.

***MONSTRESS* (Claire Teo & ART:DIS, Singapore)** confronts what we choose not to see in everyday life and exposes the behaviours we justify. It tells the

story of a blind girl, an autistic boy and his struggling mother who gravitate towards one another, while navigating a world and systems that lack compassion and ignore their realities.

As a counterpoint to the controlled or constrained bodies we encounter this season, we round up with ***Handle with Care* (Ontroerend Goed, Belgium)**. With no actors, no technicians and just a box, the audience creates its own unique, unrepeatable experience. What would happen if we were to cast convention and certainty aside for a while, and allow ourselves to be vulnerable to, and in turn, be responsible for strangers in the same space?

As always, our companion programmes for the season offer perspectives on the questions that will arise as we contemplate the nature of power and precariousness. We are honoured to provide the opportunity for all the artists in the season to speak directly with our audiences outside of performances, and to share personally their practice and lived experiences. Amongst them are international award winners and highly respected performance makers who have made significant impact on their respective communities.

This season, we invite you to take a collective first step into a new trilogy as fellow precarious bodies. We look forward to many insightful conversations, as we connect, listen and imagine new possibilities together.

SHIREEN ABDULLAH

SENIOR PRODUCER

THE ESPLANADE CO LTD



PLAYWRIGHT'S MESSAGE

This isn't my story. And I cannot reiterate this enough.
But this has become personal.

Today, we present to you three years of deliberation, discussion, and discovery around care, safety and power within the systems we live in.

On behalf of the entire team, I thank our resource persons from law enforcement, social services, caregiving, education and the disabled community. Thank you for trusting us with your perspectives, challenging our assumptions, and allowing us to glimpse the world through your eyes. A few conversations can never be enough to grasp the whole truth, but each one broadened our perspectives, confronted our belief systems and ableism, and reminded us to listen with humility.



**What we see, may not be reality.
Reality may not be what we choose to see.
One person's truth may not be the entire truth.
But does that mean they should be silenced?
Why are some of us valued over others?
Who gets to decide?**

This story is fictional. Yet, a lot will feel familiar.
Perhaps you've seen the boy on the train who goes from carriage to carriage taking countless pictures of random advertisements. Or the panting, limping mother chasing after him. Perhaps you've seen the bruises on brazen, mouthy teenagers. And like me, looked away?

I am no hero. Feeling uncertain is fair and normal, isn't it?

We all live inside systems shaped by what society has chosen to value: efficiency, independence, obedience, labels, KPIs. When these values shape our environments, attitudes, and structures, they decide who is supported and who is left behind. This is where the social model of disability serves as a reminder that people are not disabled simply by their bodies or minds, but by a world that has not been built with them in mind.

Yet, I have to believe that power begins with choice. That the systems we live in are shaped not only by policies and procedures, but by the ways we choose to listen, notice, clarify, and stay. Small choices, repeated often enough, can change what a system makes room for. Many tragedies could have been met with more sensitivity, care, and support. Even the one you will witness today. So, as you laugh and cry and rage with Sam, Melissa and Mei Ling, as you navigate this space of unknowns and piece together fragments, I invite you to reimagine a different ending with us.

For this story carries the traces of inner truths, experiences and dreams of the disabled community, caregivers, survivors of abuse and sexual assault and of women who have been fighting every day to be heard.

May we learn to see one another before we are forced to mourn.
May we become a community that is ready to offer support before it's too late.

With hope, with warmth,

CLAIRE TEO

PLAYWRIGHT AND CAST

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

It was 5:30pm, 6 September 2024, when I first jumped on a video call with the then-devising team of what would become *MONSTRESS*. I was moving permanently to Singapore soon and had been connected through a mutual friend. Hearing from Claire and the team, I knew it was a project I had to be a part of. The stories they wanted to tell felt vital and deeply connected to my own beliefs, especially Sam's story, as my younger brother is also on the spectrum. I came away thinking if I could just provide the right frame, the right lens, for an audience to access what Claire wanted to say, we'd be onto something that could both impact a community, and be a guiding force in how to, globally, make work differently... and so we began.

In early 2025, after collating all the material from the devising period into a script, we rehearsed and presented a Work-In-Progress (WIP) staging. This was where we uncovered the characters, discovered the performance language, and had an eye-opening exploration into everything access could be. I was immersed into a world of live audio description, creative captioning, embedded narration, relaxed performances, touch tours, pre-show guides and visual stories. At that stage it was, admirably, all about 'more.'

But after the WIP there was something niggling away, and in conversations with Claire, we realised it was niggling at us both—our love of... 'less', of purposeful space for the mind to interpret and imagine. However, that would mean removing access, which neither of us wanted to do, so could we find a way to have both? Guided by Claire's preference for 'embedded narration' (where necessary visual information is embedded within the text, performance and sound design), could we embed... everything? Could we seamlessly place access within the production, so that nothing is an afterthought and everything is essential?

Thanks to the team at Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay, we were programmed as part of *The Studios 2026* season and got a chance to find out.

What you are about to experience is the result of that exploration. The result of two years of intense discussion, of play, of sweat, and perhaps a few tears. It is an attempt aimed towards something new, something different and has involved every single one of us shifting the way we think and the way we act.



**This is not my story.
But I give you this frame and this lens.
Have a look through.
Perhaps you will shift too.**

My utmost thanks to everyone at ART:DIS & Esplanade, as well as the entire team of *MONSTRESS*, both through the devising, the work-in-progress, and the final production. The belief in the mission, across all organisations and team members, has been unparalleled.

YVAN KARLSSON
DIRECTOR

SYNOPSIS

What do you see?

What do you choose to see?

Mei Ling, a blind girl, moves into the apartment beside Melissa and Sam, a single mother and her son, who is autistic.

As their lives brush against one another, they navigate the tensions of adapting to neighbourhood norms, schooling pressures, transport systems and public spaces, where social expectations are rigid, repeated, and rarely questioned. They start to find an unexpected friendship in each other.

But what happens at home, stays at home, doesn't it?

Behind, between, and beyond the walls of their adjacent HDB flats, pressure builds. The walls seem to be pressing in. Corridors carry them forward, only to bring them back to where they first began. There is movement. But no exit. No reprieve.



**By the time something is named,
And help comes running,
It may already be too late.
Not all monsters arrive fully formed.
Some are made.**

Written by visually-impaired theatre maker Claire Teo, who draws from lived experience and observation to examine how harm is enabled and overlooked within the systems we trust, *MONSTRESS* is directed by Yvan Karlsson and performed by Claire Teo, Oon Shu An, Syarifuddin Sahari and Sindhura Kalidas.

The play confronts what we choose not to see in everyday life. It exposes the behaviours we justify, the silences we keep, and the lines we draw between ourselves and others. Unsettlingly familiar, *MONSTRESS* becomes a mirror, one that dares us to look away.

Moving seamlessly through text, movement, sound, and image, *MONSTRESS* asks: Why are certain voices dismissed over others? And can we become a community that is ready to offer support, before it is too late?

(1hr 30mins, no intermission)

Performed in English, with English surtitles and captioning

Admission for ages 13 and above

Advisory: Contains mature themes and some coarse language, with some references to sexual assault, grooming, and death.

There will be a post-show dialogue after the performance on 5 Sep, Sat, 8pm and 6 Sep, Sun, 3pm. Singapore Sign Language Interpretation will be available.

Creative Access: Embedded Narration

RE Relaxed Environment

For more information on access and care, please refer to page 34.



CHARACTER INTRODUCTION



MEI LING

The girl who grew up too fast. Fiercely independent. Allergic to authority.

Mei is a smart and feisty 14 year old blind girl adjusting to a new neighbourhood, a new school and life in her uncle's flat.

She finds unexpected friendship in an autistic boy, and his mother. But being blind, female and still a child means Mei is not always heard when she needs it most. Beneath all her sharp edges is a girl still yearning for safety, protection and love.

Mei Ling



MELISSA LEE

Melissa was an accountant in a construction company. She used to party every Friday night, laugh loudly, tell bad jokes, go on silly, impromptu dates, be in love with love, until the practicalities of being a mother got in the way.

Now, her life revolves around loving and taking care of Sam. She navigates education, transport, social, medical systems, feeling more powerless and isolated by the day. But caregiving doesn't stop just because you feel exhausted.



SAM LEE

An avid fan of mac and cheese and all things yellow. Sam interacts and understands this world differently. But it doesn't mean he feels any less. He has been trying to communicate. Through his paintings of turtles in the corridors, his made-up tunes on the ocarina, and the random glasses of water. The question is: Did we hear him?

INVESTIGATING OFFICER AND OTHERS IN THE SYSTEM

(Principal, social worker, bus driver, neighbours, judge, teacher, etc.)

They are doing their jobs as best they can. Guided by procedure, restricted by process, and armed with forms, files, numbers and carefully worded questions, they are part of the system that demands precision, efficiency and objectivity.

Some are jaded. Some are exhausted. Some are ignorant.

Some bring their own prejudice and judgement into the room. They aren't monsters.

But they hold power in very real, tangible ways. In what they ask, write, believe, overlook, and how they respond when someone is asking for help.



ABOUT THE TEAM

ART:DIS (ARTS & DISABILITY) SINGAPORE

ART:DIS (Arts & Disability) Singapore is a leading non-profit organisation working at the intersection of arts and disability. Founded in 1993, with 3 art centres presently, it champions arts access for persons with disabilities through a comprehensive range of community programmes and professional development pathways, including accredited training, industry mentorships, and artist residencies.

The organisation is committed to creating equity in arts education and professional practice, empowering artists with disabilities to pursue sustainable and meaningful careers in the creative sector. Through its role as a catalyst for inclusive artistic creation, ART:DIS develops and presents art experiences that foster dialogue, invite reflection, and open up new ways of seeing and connecting with one another.



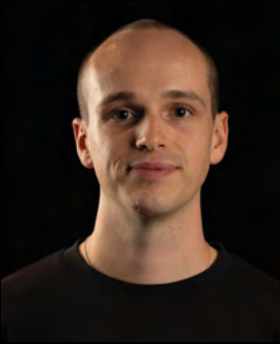
CLAIRE TEO

PLAYWRIGHT AND CAST

Claire Teo is a Singaporean actor, singer, director, writer, and artist-educator. Working across theatre, film, installation art, music, and text, she is committed to creating bold, interdisciplinary work that is imaginative, socially engaged, and boundary-pushing.

Her performance credits include *Welcome To My World 2023: Cha Cham Bo! Taking Flight*, Singapore's first inclusively-written and performed musical. Recent projects include *Scenes from the Climate Era* (Esplanade's *The Studios*), *MONSTRESS: The Reclaiming of Medea and Medusa*, *Through The Looking Glass* as part of Light to Night Festival, Singapore International Festival of Arts' *The Sea and The Neighbourhood*, and The Finger Players' NAC-AEP programme *See, Hear, Touch*.

Claire was also the opening act for The Best of Kitaro world tour, a guest performer at Super 24, and represented Singapore at World Expo Osaka.



YVAN KARLSSON

DIRECTOR

Yvan Karlsson is an award-winning director, movement director, puppetry director and performer from Boorloo/Perth, Western Australia, currently based in Singapore.

His recent work includes:

As director — *Scaredy Kat Presents* (Gateway Arts), *LEVEL UP!* (Spare Parts Puppet Theatre), *See, Hear, Touch* (The Finger Players), *Hell Is Other People* (Monkey Brain & The Blue Room Theatre), *Dreams of a Lonely Planet* (Flying Bicycle Collective & Awesome Festival), and *The Lucky Cat* (Monkey Brain & FringeWorld Perth).

As puppetry or movement director — *Scenes from the Climate Era* (Esplanade's *The Studios*), *Wizard of Oz* (Wild Rice), *Confirmation* (X+CO and Dublin & Edinburgh Fringe), and *EAST* (Atticist & The Kings Head Theatre London).

As performer — Sven in Disney's *FROZEN - The Musical* (Australia, Singapore, and Germany), *Leviathan* (Circa & Perth Festival), and *CATCH!* (Maxima Circus & Awesome Festival).

Yvan's work *Hell Is Other People* received 7 nominations at the 2023 Performing Arts WA awards, winning for Best New Theatre Work and "Best Independent Theatre Production.

He is a 2022 Minderoo Artist Fund recipient, a 2019 Perth Festival Lab participant, and a 2017 graduate of The Curious School of Puppetry London.



OON SHU AN

CAST, RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

Oon Shu An is an actor who has been spreading her natural warmth and energy across theatre, TV and film. She is an Associate Artist with Checkpoint Theatre and a Board Member of socially-engaged theatre company Drama Box. Her sell-out one woman show with Checkpoint Theatre, the cross-media production *#UnicornMoment*, was nominated for Best Original Script at the Life! Theatre Awards. She has also had Best Actress nominations for her roles in Pangdemonium's *Chinglish*, *This is What Happens to Pretty Girls*, Esplanade's *Mergers and Accusations*, and SRT's *Lungs*.

On TV, her other notable roles were in Netflix cult favourite *Marco Polo*, Mediacorp's *Code of Law*, and HOOQ's *How to be a Good Girl*, for which she won the National Award for Best Actress, and represented Singapore at the inaugural Asian Academy Creative Awards. Her feature film credits include James Thoo's *The Sandbox*, Han Yew Kwang's *Rubbers*, Sam Loh's *4Love* and Kelvin Tong's *Republic of Food*.

She was recently in *God of Carnage* (Nine Years Theatre), *The Christians* (Wild Rice), *Grounded* (SRT), *The Last Bout* with Verite Productions, and was the host of the tenth season of *Renovaid* and CNA's *On the Red Dot: Museum of U and Me*.

Shu An is deeply committed to social justice and advocacy through critical storytelling, and actively supports various causes, including mental health awareness, gender equality, and the rights of marginalised communities.

To dignity, equity and freedom for all.



SYARIFUDDIN SAHARI (DEAN)

CAST

Syarifuddin's performance experience ranges from site-specific works to theatrical productions, dabbling in both choreography and improvisation. Starting out in street dance and subsequently contemporary and Malay folk dance, he has since explored other performative and movement forms, while being exposed to various approaches in artmaking. His exploration transcends genres and labels, and focuses on embodiment and transmission. Over the years, his priority has shifted from the aesthetic body to sincerity of intention, while cultivating his *rasa*.



SINDHURA KALIDAS

CAST

Sindhura is a theatre practitioner and educator. She is an Associate Artist with The Necessary Stage (TNS) and a core team member of The Finger Players (TFP). Selected acting credits include Wild Rice's *Hotel* (2025) and *Psychobitch* (2023), for which she earned a Straits Times Life! Theatre Awards nomination for Best Actress, TFP's *Little Mournings* (2021), and TNS's *Off Centre* (2018). Sindhu was a recipient of the NAC Postgraduate Scholarship and holds an MA (Distinction) in Dramaturgy and Writing for Performance from Goldsmiths, University of London. She is thrilled to be part of this incredible creative team for *MONSTRESS*.



CHARLENE RAJENDRAN

DRAMATURG

Charlene Rajendran is a theatre educator, writer, and dramaturg. She is interested in issues of difference, deep listening, play-based pedagogy and thought-leadership in urban multicultural contexts. Her work as dramaturg includes interdisciplinary and community arts projects such as *AIR* (2024), *ItSelf Terjadi* (2023), *Kepaten Obor* (2022), *In the Silence of Your Heart* (2018) and *Both Sides, Now* (2013-2018). Publications include *Surat KeKawan* (2025) and *(Asian) Dramaturgs' Network: Sensing, Complexity, Tracing and Doing* (lead editor, 2023). She works as Associate Professor at the National Institute of Education – Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

Charlene is keen to observe how *MONSTRESS* will be experienced and engaged by audiences in Singapore, and she hopes the performance will journey on. She is grateful to have been involved in developing the work with a team of passionate and purposeful collaborators, who are also fun to be with.



GRACE LIN

SET DESIGNER

Grace Lin is a designer of sets/environments for plays, musicals and films. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Architecture from the National University of Singapore and a Masters in Design Communication from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology.

Selected Credits:

Dream of the Red Chamber (The Finger Players); *National Day Charade*, *One Meter Square* (Wild Rice); *Myles – Soulmate in a Box*, *Por Por's Big Fat Surprise Wedding* (Singapore Repertory Theatre); *COLONY* (SIFA); *The Pillowman* (Sight Lines); *Karang Guni Boy*, *The Bird who was Afraid of Heights*, *BURP* (Esplanade's *PLAYtime!*).

As Associate Set Designer: *Kimberly Akimbo*, *Singapore Michigan*, *Dear Evan Hansen*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*, *Falling*, *Into the Woods*, *Doubt: A Parable*, *End of the Rainbow*, *Muswell Hill* (Pangdemonium), *Wizard of Oz*, *psychobitch* (Wild Rice), *Cinderella* (Singapore Ballet), *2:22 A Ghost Story*, *The Almighty Sometimes* (Singapore Repertory Theatre).

STELLA CHEUNG

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Stella Cheung is a freelance lighting designer and production stage manager. She trained at The Royal Central School of Speech & Drama and was awarded the National Arts Council Arts Scholarship (Undergraduate) in 2014. Her interest lies in creating experiences and shaping spaces through light. Production credits include NDP 2026, *Live It Up!* (The Glowers Drama Group), *Kampung Halloween* (PlayPan), *The Roundest Circle* (TheatreWorks), and *Family Secrets* (The Necessary Stage). She is excited to be part of the *MONSTRESS* team for the second time.



SERENE TAN (STAN)

SOUND DESIGNER

Serene Tan (Stan) is a composer and sound designer specialising in spatial audio and immersive theatrical soundscapes. Trained in Western classical music and the *gamelan*, her work investigates the “grammar of sound”—transforming non-verbal audio into structural maps that drive narrative and emotion.

Passionate about inclusive arts, Serene frequently collaborates with performance companies and ensembles to expand the sensory boundaries of the stage, creating rich acoustic worlds for both sighted and non-sighted audiences.



JOANNA ONG

CREATIVE CAPTION DESIGNER

Joanna Ong is the creative captioner for *MONSTRESS* (2026), returning to the production after designing captions for its first iteration in 2025. She is excited to be part of its reimagined presentation at Esplanade Theatre Studio, working with an entirely new set and a larger creative team to explore how captions can function as part of the performance's visual language, worldbuilding, and storytelling.

As a captioner and creative captions designer, Joanna's practice explores the artistic possibilities of accessibility in stage performances. Working across theatre, dance and music, she approaches captioning as both a functional access service and an artistic language, creating equitable and aesthetic experiences for audiences by integrating captions into the performance.

She led Singapore Repertory Theatre's Inclusive Young Company's first creative captioned production, *Open the Curtains* in 2024, followed by *Meet Fred* in 2025, advocating for creative captioning as an integral part of performance-making. Her experimental work on *And the Cats Dance by the Light* (Intercultural Theatre Institute) pushed the boundaries of caption design through animated music visualisations and motion graphics. Other works include *YEAR ZERO* (SIFA 2026), *Shakespeare in the Park – Macbeth* (Singapore Repertory Theatre), *Secondary: The Musical* (Checkpoint Theatre), *Celup* (Singapore Fringe Festival 2026), *Through the Looking Glass* (Light to Night Festival 2025), and *COLONY* (SIFA 2025).

Committed to nurturing the practice of creative captioning, Joanna shares her knowledge through talks, workshops and mentorship, including the Arts & Disability Forum 2025, the National Library Board's *Pro Series*, and youth captioning mentorship for ART:DIS's *BEYOND DIS:PLAY* 2025.



NURARINA AWANG

PROJECT LEAD

Nurarina Awang is an arts manager and project manager with over 15 years of experience in the theatre industry. She is currently the Assistant Manager, Programmes and Centre Lead at ART:DIS (Arts and Disability) Singapore, where she oversees venue operations and leads multidisciplinary arts projects that champion accessibility, inclusion, and artist-centred practice.

Throughout her career, Nurarina has worked across productions, festivals, community engagement, and arts education, collaborating with creative teams and community partners to bring meaningful projects to life. Her work spans production management, operations, and programme development, guided by the belief that accessibility is not an addition to the arts, but an essential part of artistic excellence and meaningful cultural participation.

As Project Lead for *MONSTRESS*, Nurarina has guided the production over the past two years, supporting its journey from early development to its presentation on stage. She is deeply grateful to everyone who has been part of the *MONSTRESS* journey and is proud to help share this powerful production with audiences.



KARISA POEDJIRAHARDJO

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Karisa Poedjirahardjo is an arts and production manager working across the performing and literary arts, with an interest in community-oriented initiatives. They are thrilled to work on *MONSTRESS*, a process-driven project that engages audiences in new ways while supporting artists' growth and development goals. Prior production management credits through The Backstage Affair's mentorship programme include *Twelve Angry Men* (Nine Years Theatre, 2025) and *Invisible* (The Necessary Stage, 2026).



A KUMARRAN

TECHNICAL MANAGER

AK is a technically-inclined individual who enjoys the challenges of problem solving. He enjoys putting a plan on paper and watching it take shape in real life, especially so when it involves technology. He believes every obstacle is an opportunity to learn something new. He can also often be found with a camera trying to find interesting perspectives of uninteresting things.



WISELY CHOW

STAGE MANAGER

Wisely Chow (they/them) is a Singapore-based playwright, director, and stage manager. Their work explores the stories we inherit and what happens when they don't fit. They are drawn to the in-between, the almos, unlived lives, everyday rituals, and the quiet acts of care that shape us.



MARA KARMA

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Mara Karma has been drawn to the arts since he was 13. Starting out as a performer at weddings, he gradually became fascinated not just by what happens on stage, but by the people, planning and technical work that make a show possible. This curiosity eventually led him behind the scenes, where he discovered a passion for stage management and technical theatre. Today, he works across live productions in various technical and production roles. He is currently an Assistant Stage Manager for the upcoming production of *MONSTRESS*!



TEO LI LIN

COSTUME AND PROPS COORDINATOR

Li Lin is excited to be a part of *MONSTRESS* as a Costume and Props Coordinator. She is a freelance Assistant Stage Manager and Props Maker, graduated with a BA(Hons) in Arts Management from LASALLE College of the Arts.

Committed to building a career in the arts and theatre industry, Li Lin's work experience spans a variety of production roles and she values the opportunity to work with a diverse range of local companies. Through these experiences, she continues to grow both personally and professionally while developing the skills and knowledge needed in arts and stage management.

She is looking forward to collaborating with the team and contributing to bringing the world of *MONSTRESS* to life.

Q&A WITH THE TEAM

MONSTRESS is as much an exploration of access as it is of the stories we tell and the systems we inhabit. In this candid conversation, writer-performer Claire Teo, director Yvan Karlsson, dramaturg Charlene Rajendran and cast members Syarifuddin (Dean) Sahari, Oon Shu An and Sindhura Kalidas reflect on the creative process behind this bold new work.

Q: *MONSTRESS* explores what is seen, unseen and often overlooked. What was your first reaction when you encountered the script, and what drew you to be part of this production?

CLAIRE: This project was created as part of the Emerging Artists' Programme, supported by ART:DIS Singapore. It was about me and what I wanted to learn at that stage of my career. As a blind performer, I've always wanted to use my body more effectively in storytelling. I started ideating in 2023 and let go of many ideas before Jean Tay, a co-playwright and deviser at that time, provided us with a beautiful prompt to transform myths into contemporary local stories. This platform has given me a lot, taught me a lot, and never would I have imagined it would have evolved to where it is three years later.

DEAN: As someone who is deeply interested in the (co)existence of people experiencing and surviving within the gaps of the system, it was exciting to be able to tell their stories. Playing the character of Sam was a fresh challenge as a performer / movement artist that opened discourse regarding his portrayal, with the pressure of highlighting authenticity and nuance. Knowing that the play serves to question and challenge instead of providing answers was the biggest draw factor, as I believe that is one of the true powers of the arts.

SINDHU: What struck me was how the script presents very different experiences alongside each other without trying to flatten or resolve them. I was also excited to work with such an incredible team. I have collaborated with Claire, Shu An and Dean in the past in different capacities, so I'm grateful to have the chance to get to know them better as artists and people!

Q: This production has integrated accessibility into its artistic language from the very beginning, rather than treating it as an add-on. How did that approach shape the creative process in rehearsals?

YVAN: It shaped everything we did. Taught us not to be precious, to be open and confront our own views and opinions on what makes good theatre. What we have ended up with is something entirely unique, something we are excited to share with audiences.

CHARLENE: The creative team has spent much time, imagination and energy in deep dialogue and improvisation, to generate a vocabulary that meets the demands of this performance. Shared insights from lived experience have also helped shape the experimental process of figuring out what works. I think we're still learning about this process.

CLAIRE: Having accessibility at the forefront of our creation meant the team was always conscious of how information was brought across. And because everyone was giving and generous, it felt like I had four creative enablers with me at all times. Sometimes, a look from me would prompt a description of movement or an explanation of a joke without me having to say anything. It was heartwarming when a co-actor would advocate on my behalf or when the director would point out a blind spot I had missed, because it meant this endeavour and creative exploration had broadened and strengthened.

SHU AN: It means having time dedicated during the process to have those conversations and to workshop ideas. Yvan would come up with exercises for us to, for example, workshop how we could communicate action. Claire would then communicate what she received, what information she found helpful. And this back and forth created more of an awareness of how you are conveying what you intend, whilst also managing the line of not telling people what to receive.

Q: Embedded narration is woven directly into the dialogue, while movement and soundscapes carry key visual information. What were some of the discoveries and challenges of creating a work where access and storytelling are inseparable?

YVAN: The challenge was in the abstract. How does one communicate abstract ideas or movement? The solution has been keeping it to the personal. What do we as individuals like those moments to sound like? That way someone may hopefully feel similar. But if they experience something else, that's also the beauty of abstraction. There is no right and wrong.

CLAIRE: Having embedded narration as part of the text and fabric of the show meant every movement, gesture, breath, object and sound had to be considered. Intentionality, clarity, essentiality was examined, discussed and decided together.

CHARLENE: The collaborative process in this kind of performance-making is all the more intricate and complex when the work strives to enhance the possibilities for theatre to become accessible to varied audiences. Questions about how much time and what further resources are needed to really support this process emerge. Audiences also learn by being part of this process. Thus, much more needs to happen before the wider ecosystem matures.

DEAN: I have realised that for accessibility, certain aspects of storytelling (both physical and vocal) that were already there had to be highlighted. Personally, one way I approached it was having accessibility be a constant prompt when devising the character and performance. It got me realising the things I take for granted as an able-bodied person, and opening/widening that awareness for the underserved to perceive the show in some shape or form.

SHU AN: The exploration of intentionality, clarity and succinctness in communication. Similar to above, it makes you more aware of what information is being received by what sense, what information contributes to creating a picture. In deciding what is "essential" and what "isn't", whose needs are we considering/not considering and by what/whose standards are we measuring this by?

Q: What do you hope audiences take away from experiencing *MONSTRESS* and/or are most excited for them to see?

YVAN: I hope they are challenged, moved and inspired towards change. I'm also excited to see all four cast performing at their limit because I think the show does provide this platform for each of them to really push themselves.

CHARLENE: I hope audiences are open to sensing and resonating with the characters, and ponder what it takes to listen and respond to the fragility around us.

CLAIRE: I hope the audiences will fall in love with the characters just as much as we have, recognise them in real life, and imagine with us, a different ending.

DEAN: For them to either feel seen, heard or confronted with questions regarding those around them, especially the underserved, the disabled, the person next to them. The dream is for empathy and kindness to seep from the stage, the characters and their stories, and into the hearts of the people witnessing them.

SINDHU: I hope audiences leave thinking about whose experiences we notice and validate, whose we overlook, and what kinds of assumptions we make about people whose lives are different from ours.

SHU AN: Maybe I would just be curious to know, "What do you see? What do you choose to see?"



ACCESS AND CARE INFORMATION

This performance uses embedded narration, where key visual information is woven seamlessly into the dialogue through descriptive lines. Soundscapes and amplified movement also provide additional cues about the environment, atmosphere and intentions within each scene.

As this is a Relaxed Environment (RE) performance, you are welcome to enter and leave the auditorium as needed. If you choose to step out, the exits are located to your left and right, and a staff member will be available to assist you when you are ready to return. Your well-being is important to us.

Please note that this production contains references to death, physical violence and sexual assault. If you or someone you know requires support or counselling, the following resources are available:



AWARE (Association of Women for Action and Research)

Provides support for survivors of sexual violence, family violence and gender-based discrimination.

Helpline: +65 6779 0282

Email: helpline@aware.org.sg

Website: www.aware.org.sg



MINDS Therapy Services

Offers counselling and therapy for individuals with intellectual disabilities and their caregivers.

Phone: +65 6479 5655

Email: minds@minds.org.sg

Website: www.minds.org.sg



Community Psychology Hub (CPH)

Provides psychological support for mental health, family violence and child protection concerns.

Helpline: +65 1800 225 5529

Website: www.cph.sg

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Playwright | Claire Teo

Director | Yvan Karlsson

Dramaturg | Charlene Rajendran

Research & Development | Oon Shu An

Cast | Claire Teo, Oon Shu An, Syarifuddin Sahari (Dean),
Sindhura Kalidas

Set Designer | Grace Lin

Lighting Designer | Stella Cheung

Sound Designer | Serene Tan (Stan)

Creative Caption Designer | Joanna Ong

Producer | ART:DIS (Arts & Disability) Singapore

Production Manager | Karisa Poedjirahardjo

Technical Manager | A Kumarran

Stage Manager | Wisely Chow

Assistant Stage Manager | Mara Karma

Props and Costume Coordinator | Teo Li Lin

Originally Co-Devised with Jean Tay & Zhuo Zihao



The Studios companion programmes are an invitation to deepen engagement with the artistic works and the conversations raised in the season. The following is a companion programme to *MONSTRESS*.



IN CONVERSATION

**ACCESS AS AN ARTISTIC PROCESS,
WORKING TO GIVE EVERYONE A FULL
EXPERIENCE**

Claire and the creative team behind *MONSTRESS*

This conversation explores how access as a guiding principle changes the way a production is imagined, designed and made.

5 Sep 2026, Sat, 3pm
Esplanade White Room
Free, by registration

For ages 6 and above.

[FIND OUT MORE](#)

ART:DIS PROGRAMME PATHWAYS

ARTS & DISABILITY
SINGAPORE

ART:DIS supports close to 800 D/deaf and disabled individuals through its Visual and Performing Arts programmes, delivered across three art centres and in schools.

Our programmes span community arts participation to professional practice, enabling individuals to pursue the arts according to their interests, abilities and aspirations.

Foundation Level — Community Engagement

Structured weekly arts programmes delivered across four terms each year, supporting creative expression, confidence and social connection. Individuals develop creative skills and engage meaningfully in the arts within a supportive community.

Artist-in-Training — Artistic Development

Individuals with the interest and potential to progress undertake more intensive training to deepen their technical skills and develop their artistic voice, with opportunities to present their work publicly. Accreditation is also available for students on the Visual Arts track.

Emerging Artist — Professional Readiness

Artists prepare for professional practice through mentorships, masterclasses and industry exposure, building the skills and experience to undertake projects and navigate the arts sector.

Professional Artist — Career Development

Artists receive ongoing professional development and career support, with ART:DIS actively facilitating work opportunities, collaborations and patronage to build and sustain their careers.

Our Centres

- 133 Bedok North Avenue 3 #01-138 S(460133)
- 5 Changi Business Park Central 1, Changi City Point #03-01 S(486038)
- 3779 Jalan Bukit Merah, Community Hub #03-02 S(159462)

www.artdis.org.sg |   @art.dis.singapore



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BY AYU PERMATA SARI
& HASYIMAH HARITH
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(1hr, no intermission)

Advisory: R18: Contains some mature content. | Admission age 18 and above.

\$32

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BY DANIEL KOK AND LUKE GEORGE
FEATURING RUDRA

(Singapore/Australia)

SINGAPORE

Special iteration developed with Esplanade

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17 OCT 2026, SAT | 7.30PM
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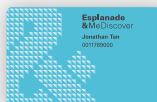
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to our Esplanade partner, arts benefactor, donors and sponsors for believing in our vision to be a performing arts centre for everyone. They made all these possible!



4.3K

activities took place at Esplanade.



70% Free



30% Paid



3.75M

people attended our live and online activities.



93%

of surveyed audiences were satisfied with their Esplanade experience.



66%

reported a positive impact on quality of life and wellbeing.

*Figures for Esplanade's activities from Apr 2024 to Mar 2025.



670 Activities

17.1K Participants

We believe that everyone should be able to experience the joy of the arts, including children, youth, seniors, migrant workers and individuals with special needs. Our community engagement activities bring the arts to those in need.

Your contribution* will make a difference.



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To find out more, email us at donations@esplanade.com or speak with us at 6828 8321.

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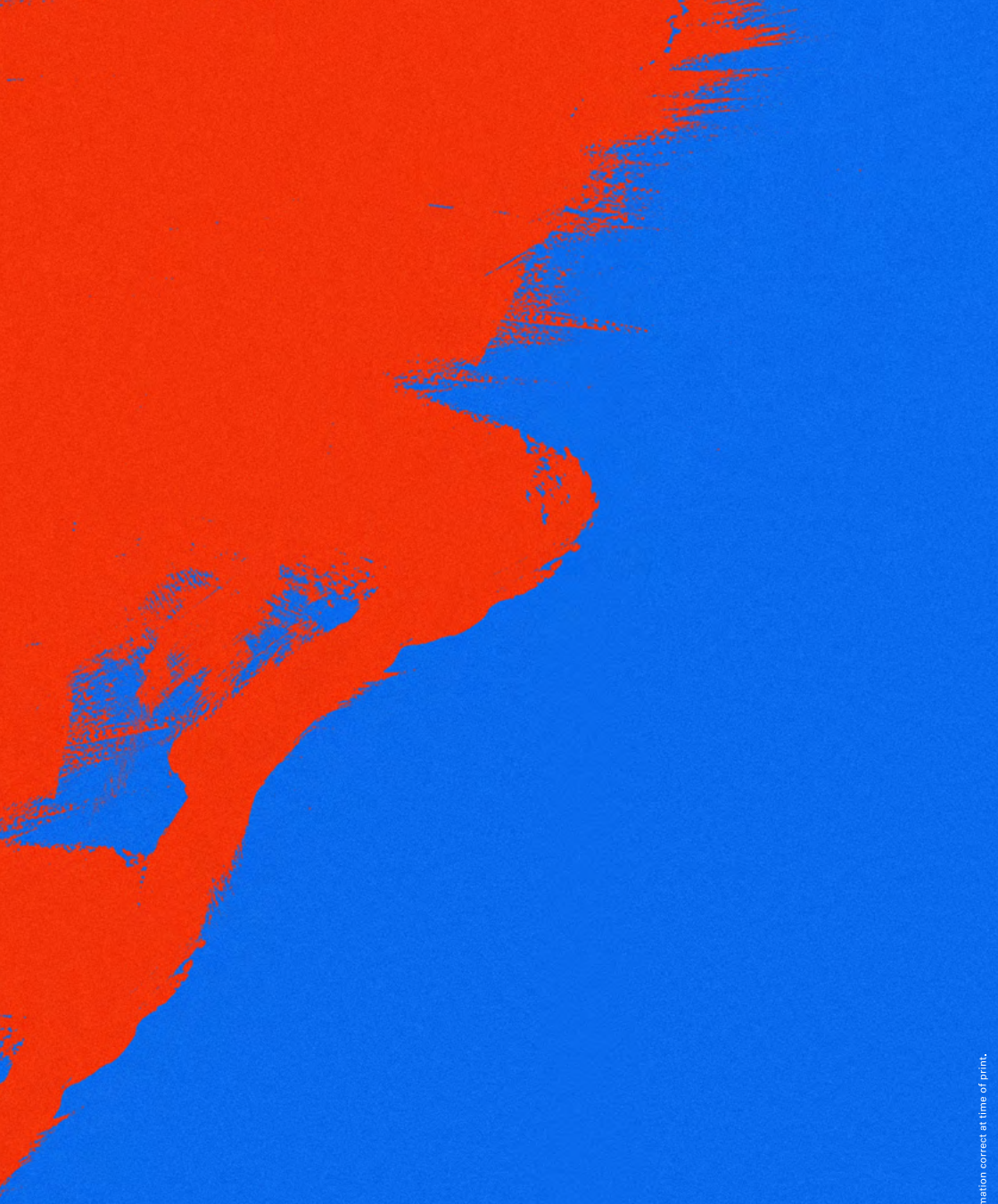
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